

TESTIMONY FOR COMMITTEE TO FUND  
CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH CARE

I am Nancy Marks. I run a small ranch operation at Townsend. Almost seven years ago I became involved with the Montana Dept. of Family Services when I fostered, then adopted two children ages 5 and 8 who had been abused and neglected .

I have worked long and hard to meet their severe emotional needs. I could not have done it without the tremendous help of the systems of care that are provided to this state. One, Intermountain Children's Home, is one of four in the nation that offers treatment for reactive attachment children. One of my children received treatment at ICH and was tremendously helped by the model, and the staff who apply it. Without this service, I do not think my child would live successfully in the real world into adulthood.

Our family is still involved with the ongoing services of Intermountain through the outpatient services and will be for some time. They come into our home, help my child, help me, and provide group counseling for me, along with social connections.

Currently one of my children is in Shodair Hospital due to severe emotional breakdown. Had this level of care not been available, my child would have gone into the juvenile detention system. We are currently trying to find my child the level of care needed for severe sexual abuse. Currently this service is not available in the state, and I recently attended the national child sexual abuse conference in Madison, WI. I learned that so many other services are available in other states for sexually abused children and I would like to ask the state of Montana to provide these services. I would like to see a developed model of services for families of sexual abuse in Montana with a directory and a guide to specialized therapy, full trauma assessments and other diagnostic services.

In conclusion, my family and I are deeply grateful for the services of AWARE, the case management provider, Shodair Hospital and

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Intermountain Children's Home. We need their continued care. I ask the committee to vote to their services available. Also we need a system of services targeted specifically for sexually abused children and their families. Families are the glue that keep these children centered and loved. But we must have the systems of care that will support us when we as parents can not give the children the help they need. I ask the committee to support the sustainability of the children's mental health care system, and to increase it to the level that will keep our kids safe and able to live normal lives. If this happens, the children do not become adults in the system as well.

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